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assault on mighty Clark
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We've all had bad dates,
but what happens when
your date with destiny
fails to meet its promise?
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ZENITH

Vol. 5, No.3

DIGEST

A serious and informative periodical for the transsexual community

Police called in to quell melee at High Risk AGM

By Tamara Sale

The annual general meeting of High Risk Project Society collapsed into near chaos when police had to be called in after nonmember Jamie Lee Hamilton refused to leave after being ordered to by chair Brian Thorne.

Hamilton and supporters attended the meeting June 13 in a bid to gain membership in the organization and force nominations to the new board of directors.

High Risk member and volunteer and former executive Deborah Brady motioned that non members be barred from the meeting. Executive Director Sandra Laframboise, who is Hamilton's cousin, supported the motion, however the motion was ruled out of order by High Risk legal council Sabrina Ali and Hamilton stayed.

Temper flared when Thorne addressed Hamilton as "Mr." during a request to call Hamilton to order. Hamilton rose in anger and refused to calm down after an almost immediate apology by Thorne. Thorne then expelled Hamilton for unruly conduct. Hamilton refused to leave, screaming indignation as members of the two opposing factions launched into an aerial exchange of vindictives, paper and plastic projectiles.

Hamilton remained in the hall until police arrived.

Later, when order was restored, Thorne repeatedly apologized for his gaffe and appealed to the membership to work together or leave. "If people don't have the common sense to work together, then what in the name of God are you doing even sitting in the same hall? If you want progress, if you want to work, then do it together, and if you can't work together, then stay away."

Thorne then announced his resignation from the board and adjourned the meeting.

After the meeting Laframboise said Hamilton

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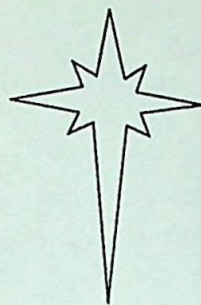


DIGEST PHOTOS BY TAMARA SALE

Jamie Lee Hamilton, top, crosses floor after outbreak to confront members as police arrive, below, to restore order to HRPS meeting



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ZENITH

DIGEST

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From the mailbag

The following has been extracted from a four page letter written by Ms. Powell. It contained a great deal of private matter which relates to the condition of gender dysphoria as well as much else that is pertinent. However, space did not permit us to reproduce it in its entirety - Editor

John Cashore, MLA
Coquitlam-Maillardville
182-1108 Austin Ave.
Coquitlam, B.C.

Dear Mr. Cashore,
Re: Human Rights in the Next Millennium

I am a pre-operative, male-to-female transsexual. I began my real life test in April 1997 and, as a result, have lost my job, a very lucrative job in an industry in which I have a great deal of experience and knowledge.....

.....Personally I would love to be back at work. I am not comfortable living off taxpayer's money. I would love to see my children on a regular basis because I am a good parent. However, until I am fully protected by the same law that protects you and your family, I will be a burden to the taxpayers and I will miss out on many of the opportunities, including being with my children. is government must stand up for the rights of

every British Columbian, whether he or she is, or is not, transsexual. Addressing the gender identity amendment is a major step in the right direction - for transsexuals, the government and society.....

Respectfully yours
Derece Powell,
Coquitlam, B.C.

Irving Kulik
Assistant Commissioner
Correctional Operations & Programs
Correctional Service - Canada
Ottawa, On
K1A OP9

Dear Mr. Kulik,
Re: Name and number deleted

I enclose file regarding the above inmate. I believe it is fully self-explanatory. Mr. Peterson, the warden appears to have a power next to God and certainly there is every indication that he regards himself as being above the simple expectations of ordinary mortals in dealing with enquiries.

If you examine the file you will see that it deals with relatively minor matters, both of which could have been disposed of quickly enough with the application of some common sense. Instead, while we do not know what goes on in the mind of Warden Peterson, we think most thinking people would write it off as "damned silly nonsense" on the part of Peterson. What this molehill threatens to become is a small mountain out of all proportion to the true issues which concern the prisoner and that, in my experience with other cases, is one of the things that is fundamentally wrong with your system. It is the cause of irritation, chagrin and is expensive in terms of time and effort on the part of both sides in fighting for some sort of resolution. I cannot help thinking that this type of action, or the lack of it, gets down to being some sort of a provocation.

On the record his lack of any response or even a bare acknowledgement, indicates extreme bad manners and the callous ignoring of a reasonable request for information after we, and the prisoner, have followed correct procedure. As a taxpaying citizen, I (and my organization) have a right to be heard and to expect a proper and adequate response on a matter of concern to us.

By way of contrast we dealt with another matter involving the complaint of a prisoner at the Regional Health Centre, Matsqui, early this year, immediately following the prisoner's release. We directed our enquiry to the director of that institution. We received a courteous and very adequate response and the matter was finalized in a manner that satisfied the prisoner.

While it may be a little cynical of us to sug-

gest that the response might have been different if the complainant had still been in custody, I am forced to wonder why one official in a federal institution can deal with a matter promptly, courteously and effectively and another in a sister institution deals with a similar enquiry with ignorant contempt. Surely a policy beyond common courtesy should not be needed to tell officials who presumably have some degree of education and sense of public duty, just how and when they might write letters to members of the public pursuing an enquiry. It is little wonder that a great many citizens view officialdom with supreme suspicion. In our view Mr. Peterson deserves a severe reprimand. Frankly, he is letting your side down.

Yours sincerely,
The ZENITH FOUNDATION
Stephanie Castle Heal
Director of Public Relations
c.c Mr. Peterson, Warden, Mission
Institution, Prisoner.

Dear Editor,

This article (*Transsexual wins top song prize*) appeared around May 12 in the Province and is excellent demonstrating that transsexuals can do anything they put their mind to.

My quote is:-

"A transsexual can do anything
any man or any woman can do,
it's only a matter of attitude"

I read so much about what a transsexual cannot do. I think the Digest should start focussing on successes instead of failures. It might motivate some to get off their butts and say "Yes, I can!"

Each of us should bear some responsibility for the overall attitude towards TS people. The overall attitude to TS people is the sum of efforts, successes and failures we each contribute. Each should bear responsibility and do our small part to demonstrate we are normal, productive, self-sufficient individuals.

Yours etc.
Michelle Johnson
Richmond, B.C.

The Digest has always taken an upbeat view of events in transsexuals lives which denote success rather than failure. This does not preclude us commenting on matters which have to do with the obstacles and negatives that many of us are faced with, which is often the reason why we take on our advocacy role. Certainly they are usually issues that cannot be ignored.

That has nothing to do with failure, but it does have everything to do with a practical assessment of the problems of others. This issue has a personal story which denotes success and it is far from being a first for us - Editor



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Examples set by leaders dictates behaviour in military, prisons



Editorial

by Stephanie Castle

In this issue we have reproduced two letters. One from member Derece Powell is addressed, following along the lines of our suggestion in the last issue of the *Zenith Digest*, to her local MLA, John Cashore, with copies to the premier and attorney general for the province of B.C. Derece puts forth her position on the subject of gender identity in a capable and logical manner and demonstrates the total frustration often faced by transsexuals in dealing with the ordinary circumstances of their lives in their quest to be accepted as people with a right to normality and acceptance.

The other letter comes from myself as an advocate for a transsexual person who languishes in prison. I don't need to recount all the details, but this I can say. The attitude of cynicism and neglect of ordinary duties as public servants manifests itself throughout the prison system. If the reader takes the

time, I think it will be agreed that it can hardly be any wonder that our public institutions and the people who run them so often come in for heavy and justified criticism and the public adopts a cynical attitude towards the whole setup.

For a good example of the evils that are allowed to fester in our institutions on the part of responsible officialdom, take a look at *Maclean's Magazine* (May 28, 1998). The lead article is an extensive expose of the situation in the military. Entitled *Rape in the Military*, it's enough to turn your stomach and it is not just the rapists who are at fault. It is the officer structure above, the so-called brass who turn a blind eye or ignore the facts of what goes on under their collective noses. It has its parallels in civil life where the traditional legal defence in rape or sexual assault cases is to try and turn the accuser into the accused by a brazen twisting of the facts and the implication that sexual assault victims ask for what they get. They are virtually accused of provocation or immoral come-on type behaviour. It's a favourite defence ploy.

The excuse so often offered is a sort of "Humour." This is what it has always been like in the services. True, but not to anywhere near the extent suggested. Armies in wartime take many

liberties so that what happens becomes part of the price of war. Men and women are going to unite if only for a passing moment, one might say, but I spent five years in the British navy as both a lower deck rating and an officer and about half of this time was spent in the Royal Navy

Commandoes. The Commandoes whether army, navy, or of the marines were trained to be one of the toughest outfits around without acting out John Wayne type situations *a la* Hollywood. We were meant to use our intelligence and act with circumspection at the same time as we were taught to be silent killers. Often we were out of the sight of women of our own race for months at a time, but I

knew of not one single instance when a commando took advantage of the first white or native woman he came across which is not meant to imply it did not happen. In five years the worst case I knew of was wholly a medical one. The young man, one of our most capable men, had caught a severe dose of V.D. likely through his own carelessness!

Why, when I look back as a veteran should things have changed so much? A woman joining the services then, might have been asked for favours and might have given them, but they were seldom taken in the manner of a rapist as though this was part of the job description. Now, a woman joining the services may well suffer, it seems, the most insulting, demeaning and outrageous behaviour on the part of her male equivalents and I gather that NO does not necessarily mean NO in the Canadian Armed Forces as subtle pressures to do with

promotion etc. are sometimes applied.

Consider our transsexual member whose story was recently told in two further instalments in a recent issue of the *Digest* (Volume 5 Number 1). If everything *Maclean's* is reporting is true, and I believe very strongly that it is, then this member's future looks like a very, very rocky road ahead. It will be interesting to see how things work out as we have now been approached by a second transsexual who is a member of the Army.

As to why things have changed so much in fifty odd years is a tough one to answer. I can only think it is because our liberal society with its increased toleration for many things, some good, some bad, has difficulty in sorting out the good from the bad. Liberalization of such issues as gender identity are clearly good as after all everyone has a sex, a sexual orientation and a gender identity. The first two are covered in human rights terms but for reasons many of us have often questioned, gender identity always seems to get it in the neck and no one has yet advanced a good reason why this should always be so.

On the bad side one wonders why the integrity and wellbeing of the female human being is so often on the line simply on account of one's born sex. If it was for me to say, as an imagined

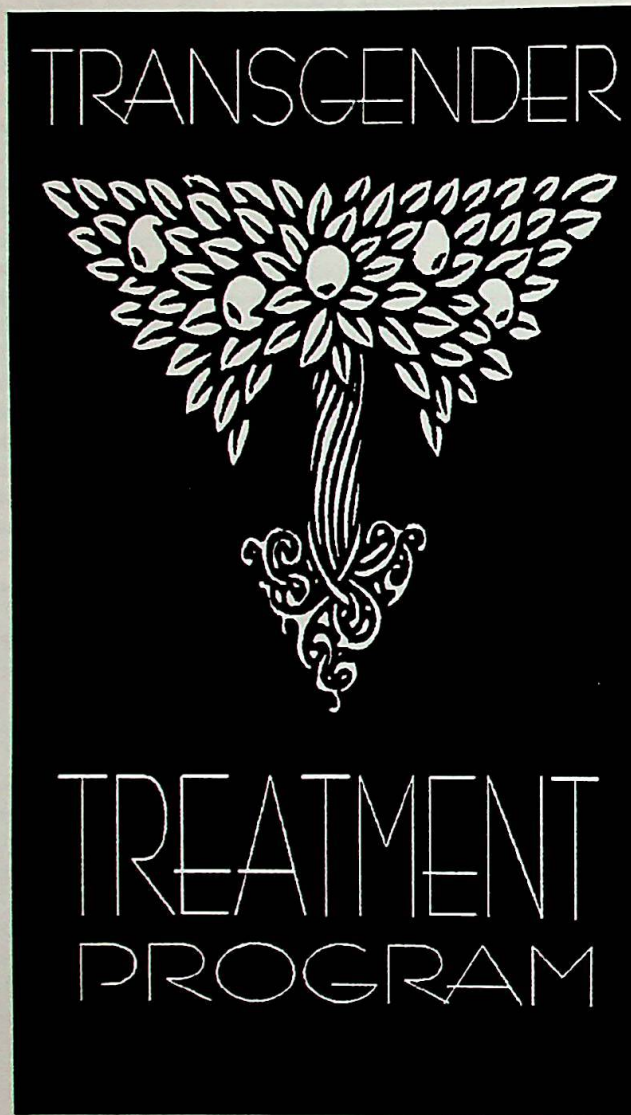
head of the armed forces, I would require zero tolerance in terms of harassment and heavy prison sentences for those who think they can get away with sexual assault or harassment of an unwanted kind. This would be in preference to the current mode of light slaps on the wrist and a tut-tut that "boys will be boys."

General Maurice Baril, the new armed services chief of staff, says that he is going to clamp down on the abuses and the abusers. He should start at the top as discipline and precedent follows the example of those who lead and our leaders have been found severely wanting in these matters.

The traditional legal defence in rape or sexual assault cases is to try and turn the accuser into the accused

New armed services chief of staff says that he is going to clamp down on abusers. He should start at the top

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OPINION

Culture, social progress and lessons to learn

By Jenny Mars

This month's lesson, class, is to never underestimate the power of a country's culture, nor to assume that modernity equals social progress. The following examples will serve to illustrate:

1) From Japan this month comes the news that the very first legal gender surgery in that country's history has been approved. A 30-year-old biologically female construction worker will soon end her 13-year quest when she receives surgery to become a man. Six months later, another operation will be approved. The Saitama Medical School, which reached the stunning conclusion only last year that such procedures were medically acceptable, says it has about 200 people asking for reassignment, about 70 percent of whom are female. *No comments on the status of women in Japan, class.*

The Ministry of Justice was quick to reassure Japanese citizens that it will not recognize such surgeries under the law. No records will be changed to reflect a person's new gender status.

2) The big news from Europe is that Dana - pronounced *Dah-nah* - International, the former Yaron Cohen before her 1993 sex change, has won the popular Eurovision song contest with her song *Diva*. Already a hit in its native Israel, *Diva*, and its composer/singer, were judged to have outclassed a large field of entries in the glitzy multinational competition. At the televised event, the audience applauded wildly, and Israeli fans gave the attractive singer a standing ovation.

Condemnation

The immediate reaction from more orthodox quarters of the country was anything but complimentary. Religious leaders condemned Dana, the contest, and their country's participation in the competition. One vowed to keep the contest from coming to Israel next year, when the country is scheduled to host the 44th Eurovision contest, only to be dismissed as a loudmouth by the mayor of the host city. The controversy has raged for weeks, with the gay community jumping on the TS bandwagon and running headlong into the rolling wave of outrage from less secular segments of society. *No cracks about your teacher's metaphors from the back of the class, thank you.*

3) Another transsexual singer, this one from Turkey, has created something of a furor in her country by getting married. 48-year-old Bulent Ersoy - *don't giggle, class, that may be considered a very pretty name in Turkey* - has enjoyed a great deal of popularity since her 1980 transition. Affectionately known as *Abla*, or big sister, to her many fans, she has suddenly inspired assaults in the media for her April 4 wedding to a 21-year-old man. Although her case set precedents 18 years ago when she won legal recognition of - and retroactive permission for - her change of gender, it seems no one ever thought a TS would go so far as to marry someone.

The upshot of the teapot tempest is that new pending legislation may eventually require that potential gender-changers get official approval for their surgery lest they be denied a state identity card in their new incarnation. It is proposed that this would take place in a courtroom, but in your teacher's opinion, it sounds little different from the approval process required in countries one might assume to be more progressive. Not exactly a draconian reaction.

So what have we learned, class? Not to judge a country and its culture by its tall buildings? Possibly. That social progress doesn't always equate with industrialization? Very good, you by the window. Those who might quickly have placed Turkey, Israel, and Japan, in order of ascending social sophistication might have second thoughts. I would like 200 words of your own on the subject by next class, everyone.

Dismissed.

Denny continues assault on Canada's mighty Clarke

By Dallas Denny

Most of Canada's transsexuals have had dealings with the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. That's because The Clarke, as it is called, is the only institution able to authorize sex reassignment surgery under Canada's public health system. Canada has other official gender programs, including an excellent clinic at Vancouver General Hospital, but it's The Clarke, down and dirty, for those who want surgery. Whether they live in Alberta or the Yukon or Newfoundland, the transsexuals of Canada have no recourse to The Clarke.

The problem with this is that The Clarke is a Jurassic Gender Clinic, an anachronism. It is a national embarrassment, a holdover from the dark ages of the early gender clinics, when transsexuals were treated with contempt and impunity-- a place which should be censured rather than licensed as Canada's ultimate experts on transsexualism-- for, you see, despite its opinion to the contrary, The Clarke in fact knows very little about transsexuals or transsexualism, and most of what it does know is wrong.

The faculty of The Clarke has published widely on gender identity "disorder"; they are responsible for three textbooks and hundreds of journal articles, most of which are seriously screwed up. And not only has The Clarke succeeded in filling the literature with bad science-- it has been successful in overriding the voices of less paleolithic professionals and bullying its views into the DSM and the Standards of Care of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association.

Susan Bradley of The Clarke was the Chair of the DSM-IV Subcommittee on Gender Identity disorders; Ray Blanchard and Ken Zucker of the Clarke were also on the Subcommittee. It is because of their influence that the DSM

Dallas Denny has delivered another broadside at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto. In our last issue we reproduced an advisory published by Ms. Denny's organization, AEGIS along with a main supporting article by staff writer Stephanie Castle. Zenith Foundation plans to send this and the previous issue to every ministry of health in Canada in the hope that somewhere along the line the penny will drop and the medical authorities will realize that this country has allowed a monster to develop which needs to be tamed, if not eliminated.

continues to link gender identity with sexuality, requiring that one's sexuality be stated as part of the diagnosis. Any transsexual or transgenderist will tell you this is nonsense. The situation with the forthcoming Harry Benjamin Standards of Care is much the same. Maxine Petersen of the Clarke, who is a member of the SOC Committee, has steadfastly insisted that the SOC include one of The Clarke's hard-and-fast policies: mandatory real-life test before initiation of hormonal therapy. The politics of the SOC Committee have been such that her voice has prevailed, even though the majority of the Committee members are opposed. Consequently, the criteria for getting hormones will almost certainly be increased over previous versions of the SOC, requiring either RLT or extended psychotherapy in addition to the 90-day period currently in effect.

HBIGDA, knowing how controversial this is, has decided not to have the new SOC validated by vote of the membership, as with previous versions, but by approval of the HBIGDA Board of Directors.

If these Clarke-influenced Standards of Care are in fact approved, it will be a devastating blow for HBIGDA, for the SOC will not in fact be the consensual standards they have been until now, but an edict from The Clarke. Many and perhaps most counselling professionals in North America will not follow the SOC procedure for



Dallas Denny is a transsexual and founder and Executive Director of the American Educational Gender Information Service. She holds a master's degree and is a licensed psychological examiner with 25 years' experience as a mental health professional. Dallas is a prolific writer of essays, fiction, poetry and songs.

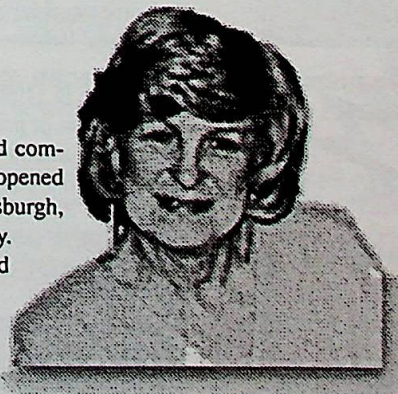
hormones. The American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., after consultation with its Board of Advisers, has taken the position that it is unethical to require a transsexual to cross-live in order to qualify for hormonal therapy. Wide distribution of the AEGIS position will make professionals aware of the ethical difficulties of abiding by the new SOC. This

continued on Page 8

Famed TS/TG MD opens clinic in eastern U.S.

Dr. Sheila Kirk, well-known writer, speaker and commentator on transgendered/transsexual affairs has opened a full service clinic at Blawnox, a suburb of Pittsburgh, PA. We understand that this includes m-to-f surgery.

Dr. Kirk is the author of a number of books and many articles and papers on medical aspects of gender dysphoria, including a series that deals with endocrine factors and hormone medication. She has a long association with IFGE.



Challenge clears first hurdle

The first stage of the Zenith challenge on behalf of transsexuals in prison has been approved by the Court Challenges program. This government funding program allows citizens, or organizations in their behalf, to challenge provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The first stage provides funding to research and initially prepare the case as a preliminary to the second stage when it can be presented to the court. The case involves discrimination and unequal treatment of transsexuals and a flagrant disregard of human rights while in prison.

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does not bode well for HBGDA, an organization AEGIS and the rest of the transgender community has hitherto supported.

The folks at The Clarke consider there is something seriously wrong with us genderfolk. This assumption colors not only what they write about us, but everything they do regarding us. In particular, it has led to some very serious mistreatment of transsexuals. Pick a transsexual in Canada-- almost any transsexual-- and you'll hear of such mistreatment. The Clarke is especially famous for bullying transsexuals into lifestyles and identities they would not choose for themselves. One woman was forced to resign her job as a mechanic for an airline-- a job she really liked-- and retrain in a traditional "female" occupation. She is now a nurse. Another woman was required to change her name-- her first name was Lonnie, her middle name Dale-- to one more traditionally "female"-- LuAnn. Other women are forced into divorce. FTM transsexuals fare no better, having to be "G.I. Joe" to the MTFs' "Barbie." In its literature, The Clarke writes about "suggesting" lifestyle changes to transsexuals, but it's not suggestion at all. It's coercion, pure and simple, for those who refuse to abide by The Clarke's "suggestions" are kicked out of the program-- and there is no other authority in Canada which can authorize SRS under the health care system.

Clarke hampered by its view

The literature The Clarke has produced is seriously hampered by its view of transsexuals as piteous creatures, full of psychopathology. Whether our mommies made us do it or whether it's in our genes, the folks at The Clarke have no doubt that transsexualism is a mental disorder. They have never questioned the Benjamin mode transsexuals-- and of course they have no idea that for every transsexual there are a dozen or more transgenderists. The Clarke turns transgenderists away or forces them to pretend to want surgery in order to get hormonal treatment.

In an era in which the theoretical underpinnings of transsexualism are being re-examined, The Clarke continues to cling to old models. That makes them obsolete, Flat Earthers in the gender world, indeed a Jurassic Gender Clinic.

The Clarke represents neither the state of the art nor the majority opinion of professionals in Canada. It has a long history of abusing and manipulating transsexuals. It does all it can to humiliate, delay, and discourage those who seek sex reassignment, and forces those who endure to become sexual stereotypes. The Clarke is, in short, an embarrassment. It is even more embarrassing that Canadian authorities continue to empower the Clarke to make all of the country's decisions about SRS. It is a national disgrace.

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An appointment with destiny, and the continuing aftermath

By Sarah Wilson

My father gave me a hug, followed by a kiss on the cheek, and then wished me all the best! This occurred as we said our goodbyes before I departed through the airport gate on my way to Portland, Oregon, on June 15th, 1997. That was very definitely the first time this had occurred since I was a little child. I nearly just wrote "little girl" but unfortunately that was not to be, even though as a child I had often prayed for this to occur.

After three decades of playing head games on myself, suppressing and locking up who I really was in my own little jail deep inside, I finally "came out" early in 1993. I had done a pretty good job of trying to be what society expected me to be, but that was about to end. Sarah had finally been allowed to see the light and I was not about to lock up who I really was ever again. I realized that the fears and the potential losses were not going to stop me any more. If I was aware of and could accept what I thought would be the worst case scenario, then hopefully things would turn out better. In reality, I had absolutely no ability or desire to stop the process that I was just starting. Once I had been accepted at the Vancouver Gender Clinic, I realized that this was the one golden opportunity for me to realize what, as a child I had eventually reluctantly accepted as a fantasy, and prior to reaching my teens had totally given up on ever happening. At that time, I had never even heard of the word transsexual



Sarah Wilson, left, uncertain at the beginning soon discovered in short order that Dr. Meltzer is one of the best SRS surgeons in the world.

and was totally unaware that "boys could become girls!" I did know however how I felt and what I desperately wanted, and that was to be a girl.

Since then, I have put in much time and effort to understand more completely who I am and what are my true motivations. I find gender dysphoria to be very difficult to be logical about;

who had gone to these surgeons. Both were more reasonable in price than others, but I was leaning towards Dr Menard due to the positive comments that had been made about the aftercare and also due to him doing the surgery in one step. I was not given these options due to MSP deciding to only deal with Dr Meltzer. From

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some things just have to be accepted as being true even though the causes are really unknown or just theory. I am not one to willingly try to fool myself into believing simple answers, rather I prefer to examine my thoughts and feelings. Preparing for transition and surgery requires careful thought, honesty and analysis, but I feel that this is what has to be done if one is to be successful and minimize the losses and nasty surprises. After I had transitioned, I would ask myself questions, and it became clear that I had no desire to return to my former life and a primary goal was for me to be as close to being a genetic female as was possible, and be accepted in life as such.

Prior to the Medical Services Commission deciding on having a contract with Dr. Meltzer, I had been thinking of having my surgery done by either Dr Menard in Montreal, or Dr. Seigers in Belgium, since I knew people

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what I heard and read about this surgeon, it did not take long to realize that he was an excellent surgeon, probably the best in the world, and became very pleased that I would be able to go to Portland. I was uneasy however about the labiaplasty since I was told that MSP was still discussing that option with the surgeon and at the present time it was not included. Later I found out that they decided that this was cosmetic and would not be funded. Even though I am employed full-time, I had/have a substantial debt load and monthly support commitments to my children. As a result, I did not have the funds to have either surgery.

I can tell you that I was extremely pleased when I found out that MSP funded surgeries were going ahead and was fortunate to obtain pre-approval for the end of June 1997 due to the fact that I am a secondary school teacher and I wanted to have the surgery at the end of the school year so that I could recuperate during the summer vacation and hopefully would not have to miss any. I was pleased and appreciative that my situation was taken into account.

My experience in Portland was very positive and I really appreciated the support that Dr Meltzer, his nurse Lindsay, care worker Fran, and the remainder of his team gave me. The amount of discomfort was quite a bit less than I anticipated, and when I developed an intolerance for the pain medication Demerol, it was resolved quickly. I cannot say enough positive about my experience. Even once I had returned to BC, I was contacted by Dr Meltzer, Lindsay and Fran with them wanting to find out how things were going. They were also very supportive when I was having dilation difficulties. Even though I had been told by Blaine Beemer at the Clinic to phone as soon as I was back in the Vancouver area, which turned out to be July 6, so that I could be examined at the Clinic, they were swamped and I was unable to get in for an appointment until August 8th.

Once I returned my home, things were all right for several weeks, other than the fact that my life seemed to revolve around dilating several times a day, something that I was already aware would be the case. I was fortunate not to get a staff infection like a couple of friends, but did end up with a yeast infection instead. I became quite scared one Sunday in mid-July because after I went to the washroom there was blood in the bowl. I can tell you that I did not relish the idea of making a trip to a hospital emergency ward. One thing that I want to mention is that I felt uneasy about seeing doctors who likely had no experience dealing with post-operative transsexuals. As a result of these fears, I decided to see Dr. Marjorie Zapf-Guilje, a doctor working at the Gender Clinic, at her private practice. Around this time, I then started to have problems related to urination which initially was thought to be a urinary tract infection with the appropriate antibiotics being prescribed.



Daine Halley, left, was experiencing similar problems to Sarah so the pair travelled to Portland where Dr. Meltzer fast-tracked them into his clinic.

The bleeding problem did not subside and the urination problem only got worse. Towards the end of August after seeing Dr. Zapf-Guilje on two or three occasions, it was determined that my urination problem was not an infection so Dr. Zapf-Guilje quickly arranged for an appointment with a urologist, a Dr. Nigro. After spending over six uncomfortable hours at UBC Hospital and seeing this specialist for only 10 to 15 minutes of this time, I left feeling very unsatisfied since I was told to see him the next day at Vancouver General. I again waited for 2 hours or so the next day and was told that the earliest I would be able to have surgery was October 15. This infuriated me because I was in a great deal of pain due to my urethra now being a pin hole in

size, and he was unwilling to deal with the bleeding problem, telling me that I needed to see Dr. Meltzer to fix that problem. Since I was supposed to be starting teaching the next week and realizing that I could not in my present condition, the solution to my problems began to seem quite clear.

As soon as I had left Dr. Nigro's office, I made my way in desperation over to the Gender Clinic and was able to talk to Dr. Rosemary Basson, the specialist who had seen me on August 8th. She agreed with me that this needed to be dealt with quickly and agreed to talk with Dr. Meltzer to see if I could be fitted in quickly down in Portland. Despite Dr. Meltzer moving his office at that time, he agreed to fit me in as soon

as possible, and since Daine Halley and I were having somewhat similar problems, he agreed to operate on both of us simultaneously. We drove down together and both of us had our problems dealt with the same day. I should mention that in addition to the urethra problem which was caused by scar tissue obstructing the urethra, I had another area of scar tissue at the rear of my vagina that was causing the bleeding problems previously mentioned. These surgical repairs were done on Wednesday, September 3rd, 1997 at no cost to MSP or myself (other than the costs of going down to Portland).

Unfortunately, the bleeding problems did not clear up totally afterwards. I had another appointment with Dr Basson on December 10th, 1997 to get her to examine me and to obtain a referral to a gynaecologist, a Dr. David Wilkie, to have further repairs done. In addition, we talked about another problem that I was having; the fact that I was having continual discomfort due to the sensitivity of my clitoris. Dr Basson examined me in this area and pointed out that with minimal pressure, my clitoris popped out and therefore protruded. She felt that I was one of those individuals who needed to have the second part of the surgery, the labiaplasty, completed to deal with the problems of discomfort. She also pointed out the fact that since I had been continually wearing sanitary pads, it was actually a blessing in disguise in that I would likely be in more discomfort if I was not wearing them. She offered to write a letter to MSP recommending that I be given approval for the second part of the surgery. As far as I am concerned, MSP has a moral obligation to fund the whole surgery, and not just use the excuse that it is only cosmetic! Do doctors usually complete half operations?

On the 5th of January, I was contacted by Blaine Beemer of the Clinic who knew of my problems, to inform me that he had arranged for me to have both my vaginal repairs and the labiaplasty surgery done on January 15th, if that would be convenient for me. I was so pleased that my problems would hopefully be finally over. Unfortunately this was short lived due to a phonecall I had several days later with Janet van Klaveran of MSP in Victoria. I was aware that MSP was still mulling over the question of labiaplasties, but had been informed that they recognized that in some situations, labiaplasties were medically necessary. It was my intent to initially pay for the surgery with money borrowed from my parents, and then get reimbursement once a commitment had been made. I was so eager to deal with the bleeding and discomfort that I was willing to do this. I was told by Janet van Klaveran that while MSP agreed that in some situations labiaplasties were medically necessary, they would not fund them at this time until they had obtained a surgeon who would do the operation. I was also informed that MSP intended to go through the same procedure that they had gone through in finding a surgeon to



DIGEST PHOTO BY TAMARA SALE

Dr. Rosemary Basson, the Vancouver Hospital clinic specialist, agreed immediate attention was necessary and worked on Sarah's behalf.

do the vaginaplasties, and that I must expect that this would take a fair amount of time. I made the comment that it would only seem logical, given their criteria, that they would end up with Dr Meltzer at the end of this exhaustive search!

Secondly, if I were to go ahead and have the labiaplasty, it would be quite unlikely that MSP would reimburse me, unless they came to some agreement with Dr Meltzer. I mentioned that if I were going to return to Portland for both the repairs and the labiaplasty, I would be funding the trip down there and Dr. Meltzer would be funding the repairs. The only cost to MSP would be for the labiaplasty. If I were to get the repairs done in BC, and then waited for MSP to finally approve my labiaplasty, MSP would be funding everything.

Thirdly, I was informed that as far as MSP was concerned, all three doctors at the Gender Clinic are only general practitioners, and the Medical Services Commission would not accept any of their recommendations that certain patients required labiaplasty. Here we have the three most experienced doctors in British Columbia as far as dealing with post-operative M to F transsexuals, and their expertise was of no value as far as the MSC was concerned. Even though Dr. Basson had examined me and written a letter to Victoria recommending that it was medically necessary that I have the labiaplasty part of the gender reassignment surgery, I was told that I would have to make an appointment to see either a gynaecologist or a urologist and

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have them forward their recommendations to the MSC. In total frustration, I phoned Dr Meltzer's office and cancelled everything!

At the beginning of March, I found out that there had not been a referral made for me to see Dr. Wilkey, due to the assumption that things would have been dealt with on January 15th. Hopefully he would do the repairs, and make a positive recommendation for my labiaplasty. I again saw Dr. Basson shortly thereafter and after another exam was told that I also had two other areas of scar tissue in my vagina that were the likely cause for the problems that I was having when dilating and the continued bleeding. Shortly thereafter, I contacted Dr Wilkey's office and obtained an appointment date on May 7th, 1998. Dr. Wilkie was sympathetic to my problems and agreed to write a letter to MSP recommending labiaplasty. He was somewhat confused as to why Dr. Basson's diagnosis was not being accepted by MSP. To quote his letter to MSP supporting my situation, he wrote, "Dr. Rosemary Basson is an eminently qualified physician to make recommendations to the Health Ministry regarding necessity of coverage for patients requiring transsexual surgery. I do not think there is any physician in British Columbia who

would be prepared to recommend transsexual surgery to a patient without obtaining the approval of Dr. Basson or her immediate colleagues beforehand." As far as the bleeding was concerned I already knew that Dr. Wilkie felt that this was beyond his area of expertise and that to his knowledge, there were no doctors in B.C. who had the necessary expertise to either correct my bleeding problems satisfactorily, or perform a labiaplasty.

I have paid into the Medical Services Plan for twenty-two years now, and up to 1994 needed medical services very infrequently. Dr. Meltzer has stated that the primary reason why he has to do the gender reassignment surgery in two parts is due to the difficulty in ensuring an adequate blood supply to the affected area. If the procedure was all done at once, necrosis of the affected tissue would be likely. Philosophically, I believe that we deserve to be treated on an

equal par to everyone else in society, and should not be forced to fund a procedure that according to specialists with much experience in this area feel is medically necessary. I strongly feel that I should not be forced to sell any of my possessions or go into further debt to fund this procedure, and I don't feel that I should be compelled to wait for an undisclosed period of time until the MSC finally decides to stop stalling and give the go-ahead for the procedure. I want to get on with my life. I can't tell you the impact that the continual bleeding and vaginal discharge, along with the clitoral discomfort has had on my life over the last 11 months. My friends, relatives and colleagues who are aware of my problems have a great deal of sympathy for my situation. I must admit however that I am indeed appreciative of the fact that at last we are able to have the initial part of the gender reassignment surgery funded. I have a great deal of sympathy for

and I made another trip down to Portland to try to resolve the bleeding and discharge problems. There has been a definite improvement but the problem has not yet been eliminated. Dr. Meltzer will be seeing us again on June 17th (one year to the day of my original surgery) to hopefully solve the problem, and I will try to be optimistic. I have been wearing sanitary pads now for 342 days, and I am still waiting for my body to co-operate!

While I am relieved that I have not had to deal with the more serious post-surgical problems such as fistulas, I feel that those planning to have gender reassignment surgery should be realistic and be prepared for the possibility that not everything will be smooth sailing. You will probably be pleasantly relieved but it would be best to be pragmatic and not expect that any surgical corrections will be fixable in British Columbia!



Sarah Wilson with Dr. Meltzer's girl Friday Fran Kern outside of the clinic in Portland

those who had to endure a much longer period of time than I did prior to the B.C. government deciding to fund vaginaplasties.

I realize that my friend Daine Halley and I are quite unique in that we have had somewhat similar post-surgical problems, to a degree that to my knowledge others have not had. While the Gender Clinic at Vancouver General is supportive despite its limited funding, the surgical expertise seems to be lacking in British Columbia as far as post-operative care, if anything out of the ordinary occurs. I feel fortunate that Dr. Meltzer is as close as he is to Vancouver, only a 1 hour flight or 6 hour drive. He has been very supportive and has expressed a commitment to resolving my complications, with as minimal a wait as possible. Trying to resolve my post-operative complications that require surgical intervention, in Vancouver, has proved to be fruitless. In addition, I am really concerned and afraid that I will be left out in the cold in regards to my need for a labiaplasty being ignored by the MSC. I also strongly feel that a labiaplasty should be performed by the surgeon who did the vaginaplasty, since he/she would be the one who knows how the first part was done.

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Sorry, our mistake

We apologize to valued advertiser Jamie Powers for a transcription error which occurred in the last issue of the Digest. This error altered the intent of what Jamie intended.

The correction occurs in the last paragraph, fourth line, of his message. What was intended was:

As individuals begin to express their gender

identity etc.

The word "change" crept in, instead of "express". This was incorrect and we hope the meaning that Jamie meant is now clear.

findlay's parting plea for equality bids gay, bi and TG paper adieu

For those of you who may not be aware, *Angles* (the GLTB newspaper) is no more; it published its last issue May 14, 1998.

Now, I recognize that some readers do not identify as gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual and that as a result you could care less about what happens to a gay-oriented newspaper. But none the less, I think that it is unfortunate because *Angles* was the one newspaper that consciously covered transsexual/transgendered issues as part of its mandate, unlike *Xtra West Newspaper* which only relates to TS/TG issues as fringe copy, items of a second class stature.

This is not to say I dislike *Xtra West*. It's a good-looking newspaper. And, it may perhaps choose to be more inclusive now that *Angles* is history.

Some of you may have heard of Barbara Findlay, the lawyer. I've known Barbara for the past four years and have worked on a few projects with her. She's great!

The TS/TG community is most fortunate to have Barbara around as she is perhaps the one lawyer in town that truly knows TS/TG issues in the broadest sense. There are other lawyers who specialize in human rights and family law who are good at what they do, but Barbara is special as she is active in the TS/TG political struggle and puts in the time well beyond her normal billing hours.

It is people like Barbara who step forward to address the hate-mongering that has been going on recently against transsexuals. She is both a lesbian and feminist. She is also a leader. She knows the struggle women face and she knows the struggle lesbians face. And, as I've mentioned, she is familiar with the struggle TS/TG individuals face.

Following is an article Barbara wrote (*Angles*, May 14/98), one that I think goes a long way in helping raise the consciousness of feminist-separatists, one that confronts the hate-mongering directed towards transsexuals.

"One lesbian's perspective on identity, space and safety.

"Most women don't know much about transgendered women. Many of us feel uncomfortable with the issue of transgenderism if we haven't met any transgendered women ourselves. Some of us have had unpleasant experiences with transgendered women (and with straight women, and with lesbians, and with ...). I have found, though, that on reflection most of us acknowledge that, whatever our discomfort, with it comes right down to it, transgendered women belong with us.

"Maybe the thing that makes me most uncomfortable when I hear lesbians arguing that
14 May/June 1998

tater tips

by Christine Burnham



transgendered women should not be "allowed" into women's space is that the arguments are the same ones I heard men make about why women should not be "allowed," the same ones I heard straight women make about why lesbians should not be part of the women's movement (or at least not be out and be part of the women's movement).

"In each case, the arguments say that the group/space/activity is one that is designed for/appropriate for men/straight women/born-women, but not for women/lesbians/transgendered women.

"Men said it was not "natural" for women to be part of the men's spaces (which, incidentally, included most of the public domain); it was only "natural" for them to be home with children. Remember the female sports reporter who won the right to go into the men's locker room (holiest of male sanctuaries) after the games, like her male colleagues?

"Conservative straight women said we were not Real Women. Straight feminist women said we threatened the integrity of the women's movement because everyone would think that all feminists were lesbians. That lesbians did not share the same histories as straight women. That lesbians threatened straight women because we would come on to them. That lesbian issues were not women's issues, they were issues about sexual orientation.

"And now, I hear that some lesbians believe that if you aren't a real woman, you should not be part of a lesbian space.

"We told men it was our right to have an equal part of what they had thought was male space and male activities, our right to define ourselves as we chose, not as they chose, and to be accepted on the basis of our own choices. We told straight women that any woman can be a lesbian (and lo and behold, many took us up on it).

"If we try, now, to say that there is some characteristic that separates the "real women" from the transgendered women, we have to climb into bed with the reactionary people who tried to exclude us. Because we are saying the same things that they said.

"How do you know who is a "real" woman? Any test except self-determination is doomed to failure. How do you distinguish between my partner, a died-in-the-wool lesbian who regularly

gets challenged and harassed because other women think she is a man, and a transgendered woman who regularly gets challenged and harassed because other women think she is a man. *Of course* significant parts of their life histories are different: my partner has always known that she was a girl and was raised female; whereas transgendered women have always known they were girls, but were raised male. But there are also significant parts of their life experiences that are the same, and different from other lesbians and from straight women.

"Just as we asserted our right to have women-only groups, to explore our gender oppression away from men; and our right to have lesbian-only groups, to explore our sexual orientation away from the oppression of straight women, so transgendered women want to assert a right to have transgendered-only groups. But just as we insisted that as women we had a right to be part of men's spaces, and as lesbians we had a right to be out and in the women's movement, we cannot deny transgendered women the right to be part of our lesbian or women's groups.

"In this case, we are the ones with the relative power, the relative privilege. We have to be careful not to confuse the discomfort of having our privilege challenged with the lack of safety when people who have, historically, oppressed us are present. And we all have to speak up. There is no "neutral" position on this issue, as there never is on an issue of oppression."

As I mentioned in my column (*Zenith Digest Jan./Feb. 98*), it will be up to the fair-minded women to speak up and confront the hate-mongering, for them to confront the bigotry, prejudice and intolerance within their own ranks, and for them to do so for their own reasons. The oppressed, in this case TSs, in turn need to do what they can, realizing that the struggle to overcome hate, bigotry, prejudice and intolerance affecting *all people* needs to be our goal, too. More about this, in my up coming columns.

Thanks Barbara for making the effort to put your ideas out there.

As noted elsewhere in this issue another transsexual has broken through the glass ceiling of mass popularity. Dana International, a singer from Israel, has won the annual
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Eurovision Song Contest.

This contest involves 25 nations throughout Europe. In past years, such talent as Celine Dion and ABBA gained worldwide fame after winning the contest.

What I found most curious was the homosexual slant that tagged the story. I quote from the Globe and Mail: "The victory sparked the largest-ever spontaneous demonstration of gay pride in Israel, as thousands of homosexuals and their supporters celebrated until the early hours... The sight of men kissing in public, accompanied by large numbers of transvestites, shocked television viewers in a country where gay men and women feel less than welcome."

Curious, is it not? Is it possible that the gay/TS connection is real? Is it possible that the "thousands of homosexuals and their supporters" were misread and that they were all TS individuals in various stages of transition? Could such hype exist in Canada/US if a TS entertainer won such an international contest?

Let's not lose our perspective here. I'm assuming that Dana came up through the gay community, that before her SRS (1993) she was embraced as a drag queen entertainer more so than a TS entertainer. Of course, if I'm wrong and she was from among the heterosexual community, then maybe the pride that was being demonstrated in Tel Aviv is but a glimpse into "our" future world. However, I don't think I'm wrong, this time.

I've posted three articles, two from newspapers and from off the Internet, in the Client's Room at the Vancouver Clinic, for those of you who'd like more background on Dana.

I plan to devote my next column to exploring this TS/gay connection in more detail.

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Have you heard of Viagra? It's the new "male" medication for combating impotence. Then again, it is also being used to help women, particularly those who have had any surgery "down there".

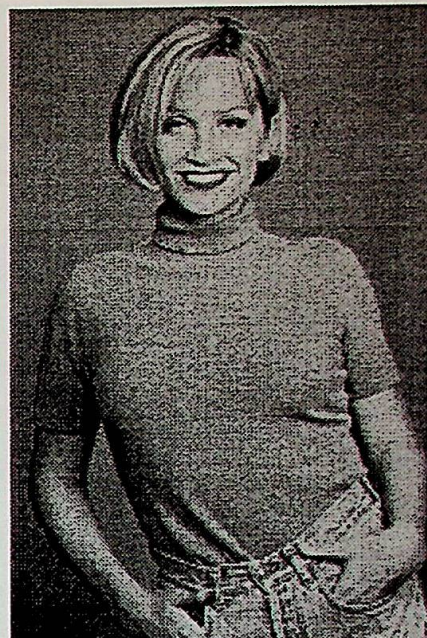
This leads me to suggest that maybe it will be appropriate for post-op TS—both F-M and M-F. I asked one of the doctors and she indicated she'd investigate further. I'm sure we'll hear more later.

The month of June is "TS/TG census month". GC Services, in co-operation with the Gender Clinic, Zenith Foundation, High Risk Project, FtM Networks, and Youthquest, will be circulating a 10 page survey questionnaire.

This survey is similar to the employment-focused survey I did in 1992, except that this 1998 survey is much broader in scope. Whereas the 1992 survey was limited to Gender Clinic patients only, this 1998 survey distribution will be much broader, seeking feedback from both transsexuals and transgendered.

Be looking for your survey questionnaire to arrive in the mail soon. If you do not receive one before the middle of June, phone me (875-8262) and I'll send one to you. Don't delay in filling it out, as the deadline for returns is the end of June.

Christine is a professional electrologist and an employment and human rights issues advocate for gender dysphoric individuals.



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Yes, that's our cap in our hands

It goes without saying that when we talk about publishing the *Digest*, we are also talking about the finances of the Zenith Foundation and we have to admit that sometimes our finances are pretty thin.

But first let us note that we are not alone among transgendered organizations who have had similar problems. Sooner or later it seems to hit us all, large and small. Probably the biggest organization serving a big transgendered

clientele is the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). Over the past several years it has gone from financial crisis to crisis. The well respected AEGIS organization headed by Dallas Denny has found it necessary for its survival to merge with another organization called *It's Time America*. This new organization is presumably sending out a wake-up call to all and sundry that it's time that the TS/TG community was finally recognised and welcomed

into the community of communities instead of being a community of outcasts through no fault of its own, out of step with the rest of society. Good luck we say, because that echoes our thoughts.

The Zenith Foundation directly and through its publications including the *Digest*, has earned a lot of respect for its efforts both in reaching out to the transsexual community and successfully advocating in its behalf. There are other organizations in Canada who deal with the broad transgendered community, but there are none which fill the role that Zenith does so completely, that also has the support and respect of members of the professional community.

However, compared to the finances of others it is all done on a shoestring. Our activities in the fields of education and advocacy do not evidently entitle us to the tax benefits of being a registered charity, which is why we never describe ourselves as such, but we are a charitable organization.

We have given a lot of help through our support groups and individual counselling. In some instances where a person is financially stretched we have given them all the benefits of membership at zero cost. The very act of writing for, producing and distributing the *Digest* is a labour of love on the part of three main people, but with input from others in the form of contributions of one sort and another. In spite of the generally understood knowledge that this is all achieved by volunteer effort, there are those who could contribute but will not. They want the paper, but will pay nothing for it. They want service when in need but expect it all to be handed to them on a plate, free and without considering the cost to others.

We have just seen the Vancouver publication *Angles* fold its tent. It was a worthy little paper primarily focussing on the gay and lesbian community, but with a lot of sympathetic support for the transgendered community towards whom they always made an effort to give fair coverage. Calgary based *Illusions* likewise is no more. We presume that the basic reason was financial. It would be a great pity to see Zenith go the same way for want of adequate support.

What does it cost to put the *Digest* into the hands of members and subscribers? Allowing for postage and envelopes, printing and production costs it adds up to about \$2.40 per copy or \$14.40 per year. You may say that costs are excessive but remember this can only have a limited press run and we believe that a quality production is better in the long run than something turned out like many cheap and tacky little newsletters.

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did not follow established procedure in her attempt to gain a membership in High Risk. "Ms. Jamie Lee Hamilton is permanently barred from the premises of High Risk Society, as long as I am executive director," she said. Tensions between Laframboise and Hamilton in the past led to court actions with restraining orders being issued.

Hamilton has also had problems with High Risk in the past.

"She complained to funders and it distracted us to deal with the unfounded allegations. It took us three months to go through internal investigation to get letters that denied every single allegation and she's at it again," Brady said.

"We're not doing our real work. What we're dealing with is unfounded allegations and the things that she's learned at this meeting will feed that process for further unfounded allegations."

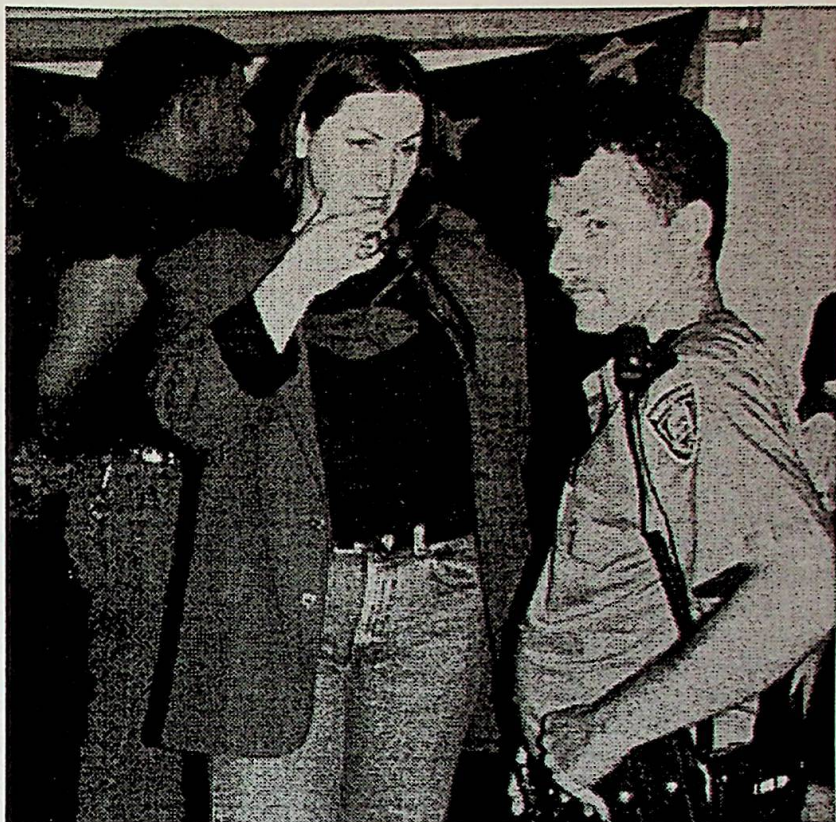
Brady would not elaborate on the alleged allegations.

"We have invited her to every major public event that we've been involved in. I invited her to come with us to the legislature for the reading of the petition. We invite her into the law brief, we have tried to work with her in every way and every time it's turned out to be unworkable. She is someone who will not involve herself in process. She's always in front of the cameras and never doing the hard work behind the scenes."

"It's the members of any organization that makes the organization," Hamilton said. "In the situation that we are into today, members rights are really being stepped on and that's sad. It's obvious that the executive director of High Risk doesn't want to have any sort of unity. It's really surprising when one works so hard for inclusion of human rights of all transgendered people that they would try to expel from the meeting one of their recognized leaders of the community."

"If I decide I don't like you, do I have the right to attack your character? No, I shouldn't. You know, I think we all in this world have a role to play, and those of us in the transgendered community particularly need to pay special attention to where the real class oppression comes from, and if any transgendered person joins the oppressors in society, I have no time for them."

"My greatest hope is that one day people in this society, regardless of race, age, colour, background or lifestyle, will be allowed to live a life free of intolerance and bigotry," Hamilton said. "After I saw the actions of some people today who see themselves as leaders within the transgendered community, if they are the ones leading, I'd say the transgendered community is ultimately destined to fail."



DIGEST PHOTOS BY TAMARA SALE

Sandra Laframboise, top, tells her story, while Brian Thorne, below, asks Jamie Lee Hamilton to leave meeting



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You can take the girl out of the country, but sooner or later she's got to go back

I recently had the pleasure of seeing someone who richly deserved some success in her life, actually achieving and enjoying life after a period of grinding rejection, near poverty and living on the edge since she had surgery a few short years ago. I'm referring to Andrea Richard known to some of us as a friend and an early supporter of Zenith.

To be accurate Andrea could be described as a country girl. The outdoors and an understanding of nature come naturally to her. Trained as a biologist and with a lengthy experience of working in the wilderness on environmental projects, she was used to the lonely life, being dropped off by helicopter, carrying all her kit on her back and slinging a trusty rifle just in case. Kitted out in this manner her job was to evaluate nature and man's attack on all things around us that affect the natural order of things.

She tried living in New Westminster and North Vancouver. She tried being a city girl and, being endowed with a good figure and good basic looks embellished by suitable cosmetics and with the clothes she looked the part. But try as she would, and believe me she tried many times and at great length, she simply could not break through that thinly disguised disinterest which often masks hostility to anyone who is transsexual.

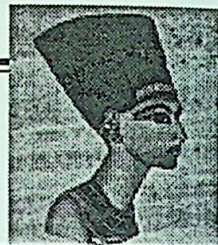
Eventually and in sheer desperation she returned to her home hearth at Powell River, not defeated, but in order to regroup. Employment Canada put her through a refresher course on computer skills at the local campus of Malaspina College, she gained work experience with the Ministry of Forests local office and then landed a job with an environmental group engaged in salmon stream rehabilitation. Here her outdoors knowledge and training in biology were the clinchers plus the fact that she correctly assessed her own strong and weak points.

In the meantime she also took over the management of a small badly run down farm just over a year ago. The place had been neglected for years and her job was to collect the rents from two adjoining properties and look after the property on a care and maintenance basis. It provided her with a spacious home and she had a complete carte blanche as to how she ran things so long as it was for the good of the property. Last spring she set to in cleaning up the raspberry patch and got a surprising amount of production out of it with all its setbacks. In a non-commercial sense she makes excellent wines much of which will come from produce she grows herself.

She started a flock of chickens and now produces some of the yummiest brown eggs one will

Commentary

by Nefertiti



DIGEST PHOTO BY TAMARA SALE

Andrea Richard doing quite well back home after stab at city life.

ever find from what she now calls Sunnybrook Farm! The tractor works properly again thanks to her mechanical skills and this year her output of raspberries and eggs should multiply manifold as she is expanding both, and she can sell everything she produces to a select group of customers one of whom is myself at any time I pass by and can purchase some of her wonderful produce. And it is only going to get better and more productive.

This year her salmon enhancement project is renewing itself and like many employment opportunities in the countryside it is seasonal in nature, but for its six months duration it will add to her overall annual income from the farm in a significant way. Added to all this her computer skills are being exploited through a partnership she has with her brother, a highly trained computer expert, in developing a computer consultancy business for the Powell River area.

What is the point of recounting the foregoing?

What sort of a message is implied? The answer is that she is a living example of adaptability, industry and an ambition to succeed and get over the obstacles ahead. She gave up the idea of being something she was not cut out to be. Now the elegant finger nails have mother earth under them and the rubber farm boots are not designer items from Fifth Avenue. There is drive and ambition and a happiness through achievement instead of anxiety and the monthly challenge of just getting by.

What Andrea has done may be a lesson for many of us. She sorted out her values, added up her positive points and discounted the negatives and she has made a life for herself with which she is happy. She cast off false values and recognized where and how her best interests lay. On the Sunday I went with her, her mother and a lady friend, to the local farmers' market where all sorts of people bring their produce for sale. There is everything that the land can produce on display through from spring to fall and people trade, buy, sell and generally socialize with each other. Many industrious people create their handicrafts through the winter and sell through the summer. Others bake on a weekly basis or put up preserves and many a fine pot of jam or marmalade produced in one home finds an appreciative market in another.

There was a flash of the old city Andrea there also. The tan acquired while working outside gave way to some carefully applied makeup and clothes more stylish than were needed around the farm and as I looked at her I saw a smiling confident Andrea who drew satisfaction from her achievement and could hold her head high with anyone.

Some of us go down the wrong road and expect to be turned like a sow's ear into a silk purse overnight. I'm not being negative, but for most that illusion is not going to become a reality. Adding up and building on our assets which include experience, education and the realities of making a living in a tougher, sometimes harsher era, when many have to get by on their own efforts and not rely on someone else, are more likely now to be the order of the day. The regular wage check without worry is so much pie in the sky for the majority. We all have to be entrepreneurs and Andrea and others like her are showing us that it can be done.

Hate propaganda just as damaging to those who create and spread it

X-tra West is a local newspaper which serves Vancouver's Lesbian and Gay communities. Propaganda was, as many of you know, anonymously stuffed into recent issues of the paper which were distributed on the east side of the city. Michelle Clancy, Associate Publisher, responded in her column with an excellent article identifying the instigators as "anonymous cowards". Stephanie Castle in her editorial for this publication came out strongly against the "faceless, nameless critics".

All of this led me to reflect on the relevance to the Transgendered community of an article by Blumenfeld entitled Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price (Beacon Press, 1992). The author cites six reasons why homophobia is hurtful to everyone, and I would suggest that what he says is just as applicable to the issue of transphobia. The following three points are taken from his article.

Transphobia and "homophobia hinder individual growth, creativity, and self expression by confining people in rigid gender roles". Whereas rigid gender roles can create much grief and hardship for transgendered children, adolescents and adults it also negatively affects everyone else in our society by limiting them to a cookie-cutter mode of self expression.

Transphobia and "homophobia generally restricts interactions with other individuals in society including family members". This is an experience all too common in the lives of transgendered people who may find themselves cast out of meaningful roles and relationships because of the fears and anxieties of their parents, children, siblings, spouses, colleagues and friends.

Transphobia and "homophobia hinder an appreciation of other forms of human diversity". Such phobic attitudes set up a situation where it

is all too easy to see individuals as less than' because of their age, race, ethnic origin or religious affiliation.

The illicit insertion of the hate literature found in West was an aggressive and a malicious act. It very understandably hurt and angered the members of our community. Such incidents, however, do not hurt us alone. Such incidents are, I believe, ultimately hurtful to anyone in our society who is male or female, anyone who can benefit from more authentic interaction with family, friends and colleagues and anyone who has a minority status. Perhaps the message we want to express to our larger society about hate-mongering in this or any form is 'STOP THIS. IT OFFENDS US. IT IS DAMAGING TO US. AND REMEMBER IT IS DAMAGING TO YOU'.

Special circumstances surround the writer of this piece so her byline has been omitted.



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REFLECTIONS



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POLAROID PICTURES

As a child during the fifties I was fascinated by polaroid cameras. I can still remember a friend's birthday party where I was first exposed, no pun intended, to the camera's magical workings. This was magic of course, much more alluring than the baseball game and the other dismayingly gender-role conforming activities that would face me later that afternoon!

Stephanie Heal and I were recently sharing first memories of gender identity and of gender differentness. I later reflected that it is only in some very rare instances that these moments are recorded on actual film and can thereafter be found in the family photo album. More often than not, these first moments of realization are privately captured in our mind, developed by our own internal processing with the finished image stored away within the heart or soul. These "personal polaroids" are different from the other photos in the family album. These internal images are rarely shared with family and friends during our childhood and

adolescence. These "personal polaroids" of the true self are not lined up beside baby photos, school pictures, and images of family festivals and gathering. Yet, if you ask most transgendered people, they will share that those first private pictures of their authentic self are equally, if not more important, than the ones that fill the family album.

In therapy I often find that it can be empowering for a person to return to those first moments of realization and to rediscover who they were then, and from that point in time who they are intended to be now. As "personal polaroids" are brought out again it can be possible to view them with a new sense of pride and hope.

Hoping that your "personal polaroids" are receiving the attention and affection they deserve.

Jamie Powers is a Registered Clinical Counsellor working in private practice. There is a fee for his services. Jamie's office is located within the Centre for Sexuality, Gender Identity and Reproductive Health at 575 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver. Call (604) 737-8482